DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 211 037 IR 009 414

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TITLE Conservation of Library Material in Tropical Conditions: The Example of Nigeria.
PUB DATE Aug 80
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Federation of Library Associations (Manila, Philippines, August 18-23, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Books; *Climate; Climate Control; *Developing Nations; Insecticides; Library Facilities; *Library Materials; Microfilm; Paper (Material); *Preservation
IDENTIFIERS *Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Nigeria, a tropical country, has an overriding concern for the preservation of its library materials from the ravages of heat, high humidity, insects, and mold. This paper generally deals with prevailing climatological problems, existing library facilities and their shortcomings, internal climate control measures, pesticidal treatments, microfilming, and other methods to preserve the printed word. They are actively seeking long range solutions and the development of a national program for the preservation of library materials. There is a short bibliography. (RAA)

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ED211037

IFLA General Conference 1980
Division: Management and Technology
Section: Conservation

89/CON/2 E

CONSERVATION OF LIBRARY MATERIAL IN TROPICAL CONDITIONS: THE EXAMPLE OF NIGERIA

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IR009414

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There has always been books in Nigeria since the contact with Western World - in the 16th century. There has also earlier been the parchment and the literature of the Islamic world far longer in the northern part of Nigeria which is predominately Muslim by religion and which has for years been in contact with and part of Muslim civilization with its writings and civilization.

The olders modern library in Nigeria can be said to be the Henry Carr Collection that was built up at the beginning of the century and which was amalgamated and formed the nucleus of the University of Ibadan Library in 1948. There has since been many other libraries. A particular feature of book collection development and preservation in Nigeria and probably in the developing countries generally has been for the collection not to stay too long in one place. This feature is due to lack of ample buildings and invariably the collection outgrows the space initially allocated in whatever buildings it had and is moved somewhere else because of this or because the room or space is to be used for other purposes. This process usually means that the collections are all handled and in the process cleaned, dusted and treated in one way or the other of such deleterious effects as mildew, humidity, dust, fungi, and insect attacks. However, the collection of some University now and some of the government special library collections have been stored for about three decades now without necessarily being moved.

The Nigerian climate is of particular significance for the conservation and preservation of books because of its nature and characteristics. There are ranges in the climate data for Nigeria because of its size which covers the area of the tropics in the south to the sub-tropic or near desert areas of the north.

		North (Kano)	South (Enugu)
Rainfall		33.3 inches	71.5 inches
Temperature	- Maximum	91.6 degrees F	87.8 degrees F
	Minimum	66.6 degrees F	72.4 degrees F
Relative humidity			
	6 a.m.	60%	69%
	12 noon	32%	62%

In Nigeria, there are two seasons: the rainy season and the dry season, the length of the period of which vary from north to south. In the south, the rainy season lasts for nine months (March to November but in the north it lasts only four and one half months (mid-May to September). Generally there are four seasons of two rainy and two dry seasons. The long rainy season (March to early August), the short dry season (August) the short rainy season (September to early November) and the long dry season (mid-November to February).

"Shade temperatures" exceeding 100 degrees F has been recorded in the north-east where frosts have also ocurred during the dry season. Elsewhere, but particularly in the south, the temperatures are fairly constant. The ides that the sun always shines very fiercely in Nigeria is inaccurate because during the rainy season, clouds usually hide the sun, whilst dust-haze plays the same role during the dry season. What makes the climate of Nigeria so trying is not the high temperatures, but the relative humidity which exceeds 80% along the coast for most of the year. The harmattan whichblows during the dry season, is a cold, dry and dusty wind. It brings about considerable drop in the relative humidity, making the weather rather invigorating. Unpleasant aspects of this wind include very cold nights, cracked lips and furniture as well as thick deposits of dust all over the house. Bush fires are common during the harmattan.

The climate allows for the luxurious growth of the two enemies of books in West Africa viz. insects and moulds. It allows for a fecund breeding of various insect pests both indoors and outdoors and especially in the rainy season extremely conducive to the thriving of moulds, mildew and various types of fungi.

Nigeria does not manufacture paper, therefore paper especially for books in the country are all imported and because the imports are from virtually all parts of the globe, different types of paper both in content and quality are found in the country. Most of our libraries stock books from the English speaking western world so most of the paper of the books are typical of books that would be found in say an English library, including for some peculiar quality of paper for books printed in India and the East e.g. Hong Kong. Similarly newspapers are made from newsprint imported into the country. These deteriorate at a very fast rate.

Most libraries are kept in simple Western style buildings made of cement block with very ample fenestration because of heat of air. Many of the university libraries and some special libraries are housed in air-conditioned or partially air-conditioned buildings. Air-conditioning in this context is used as a means, in addition to cooling the room for readers, for books preservation by controlling the inlet of air, and keeping the room at a temperature not conducisve to the life, growth and reproduction of insects pests as the temperature inside would be peculiar and unsuitable in contrast to that which the insects are used to outside in their normal habitat.

Where the books are not in air-conditioned buildings there is usually a battery of cleaners and low level paid helpers dusting and cleaning almost daily to keep out insects, moulds and fungi infection. If some of the books in the library are not in good condition, it is usually because wither due to inadequate staffing the cleaners are unable to catch up with the pests and moulds in keeping them out.

The need for libraries in Nigeria is very great and books and libraries are insufficient and inadequate, so that most collections get handeled regularly by readers. The effect of this is that the number of books that are allowed to deteriorate to conditions where they cannot be used must be very few indeed, and would be the not-so-used books.

Since most of the books and all the paper are imported, the country benefits from all the efforts being made to preserve paper in overseas countries. However, because paper and books are sometimes not tropicalised some special attention to be given locally is necessary.

These include the tendency to have libraries and books kept in air-conditioned buildings although air-conditioning units in various parts of Africa has proved capricous, unreliable and tend to break down frequently undergoing repair for long periods usually due to lack of pare parts locally.

Great use is made of various insecticides to treat books and paper materials. Experience has shown that some of the insecticides made abroad are too expensive and/or are not very effective with local pests. Therefore, in addition to these local concoctions with the assistance of local scientists have been made are bing applied both as a deterrant and cure with varying results. Sometimes the insects get used to the local insecticide, sometimes the application may be confined to use as a cure after books have been infested to get the pests and moulds out. Many libraries identifyinfested books and collect them for periodic general fumigation.

Many library buildings also have fine mesh of wire netting to keep out insects and prevent them from breeding in the books. Most fair sized libraries-institutions, and public libraries have their own bindries or access to a bindry where restoration work in the form of book repair and reinforcement of book covers are carried out.

Microfilming is initially been used more as a means of compact storage. A few libraries have microfilming equipment and microfilm special materials for preservation. With a wider range of portable microfilm readers in the market and more commercially produced already microfilmed materials especially of newspapers and documents, libraries are increaseingly using microfilming.

Special rooms variously called reserve rooms, document rooms, special collections room, etc. are in use and meant to preserve special books especially pamphlets and documents from general usage and common handling and in conditions where they can be supervised closely and taken care of with greater care.

One of the special problems for book preservation in this tropics is the need for cheap books. So far cheap books have meant books that can easily be attacked by pests because of the poor quality of paper, ink, covers, etc. Secondly, there is a need to have inexpensive insecticides or pesticides that can be locally made and which whilst cheap would be very reliable.

Other special problems in the tropics include sand storms in the norther areas close to the desert and dust all over the library because of the surroundings where most of the roads around are untarred and are extremely dusty. Heat and humidity also affect the pages of the poor quality books and over the years these become brittle and fall into pieces. Book covers are also affected and will warp and shrink.

There would seem to be a strong need to have standards and specification for preservation of books especially for such materials as paper, newsprint, binding binding cloth and pesticides. Consideration need to be given to establishing units or agencies that will deal with these for tropical and sub-tropical countries. There is the need to reactivate Barrow's idea "to develop a national program for the preservation of research library materials with its primary concern directed toward the preservation of retroactive materials."

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